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## House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. SAM JOHNSON, for 5 minutes.

### REPEAL OF THE 16TH AMENDMENT

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, today is tax day. It is on this day that every hard-working American sends more money than is necessary to the Federal Government, a day that most people probably would like to forget.

Most Americans are tired of big government, high taxes, the complexity of the current Tax Code and, guess what, the IRS. Well, I am too, and I plan on doing something about it.

Last week I introduced a bill that everyone can support and rally behind. It will unite Members and the public behind a common goal, eliminating the IRS and developing a new tax system. I think that is something every one understands and is energized about.

My bill is called the tax freedom bill and would repeal the 16th amendment to the Constitution. That is the amendment that authorizes the income tax. The tax freedom bill is designed to reverse one of the most destructive amendments, in my view, to the U.S. Constitution.

As most of my colleagues know, the 16th amendment was passed by Con-

gress in 1909, ratified in 1913, and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1916. It has been 81 years since the Supreme Court's approval and Congress, in all its wisdom, has developed a tax system that has become the most economically destructive and possibly complex, overly intrusive, unprincipled, dishonest, unfair, and inefficient system in this Nation's history. I do not think anybody can disagree with that.

The current Tax Code has become an uncontrollable and rampant institution with no regard for what has made this country great, individual freedom.

Mr. Speaker, there is a bill on the floor that we will consider today that illustrates the problems we face. The bill makes browsing or snooping through taxpayer files a crime, subjecting offenders to criminal penalties of up to \$100,000 and/or 1 year in jail. To me this is a serious violation of privacy, and I am greatly disturbed that has been allowed to occur within the IRS.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one more reason why the IRS should be abolished. It is time for us to stop tinkering around the edges, time for us to get serious and abolish the IRS and replace the current system.

The tax freedom bill is the first step to do that. I believe it will encourage an open, honest, and constructive debate about why our current tax structure has failed and what we should expect. By embracing the principles of freedom, we can create a system that is fair and simple, that reduces the bureaucracy, that encourages savings, that is efficient, that drives the economy, that creates opportunity for all and finally puts more money in our pockets.

The current system fails to meet these commonsense criteria. It is not fair or simple.

The current system has 480 different forms plus 280 more to say how to fill out the 480. Explain to me how the first

480 can do anything. The original Tax Code, by the way, only had 11,000-plus words in it. Today it has 7 million plus.

It does not reduce bureaucracy. The IRS staff is over 100,000, about 110,000, one of the most out-of-control big government staffs that we have, more people in the IRS getting into our pockets than there are immigration and customs agents on our borders.

The current system discourages savings and investment by taxing income when we earn it, taxes it when we save it, taxes us when we invest it, and taxes us again when we die.

It is not efficient. Complying with, I think, the Federal Tax Code costs taxpayers more than \$600 billion a year.

Replacing this system will cause interest rates to go down, by every testimony that we have had, and savings and capital investment to increase.

Finally, we have stifled opportunity by designing a system that picks winners and losers, one in which Washington decides what is best for the people instead of letting the people decide what is best for America.

As recently as 1982, Americans paid only 19.9 percent of their income in taxes. New data reveals that in 1995 Americans paid 31.3 percent of their income in taxes, the highest level in history, and that does not count local and State. If we add those in, we are paying nearly 50 percent, 51, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, those that say the system can be fixed are crazy, in my view. It has undergone 31 major revisions and 400 minor ones in the past 40 years. I believe any new system must be based on a vision of America that places the individual, not the Government, in charge.

### THE AMERICAN DREAM TAX FAIRNESS EQUITY ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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